

Wells Gray Gateway Protection Society Submission to Professional Reliance Review

Introduction/Background

The Wells Gray Gateway Protection Society has many concerns regarding Canfor's current actions and future plans relating to the Clearwater River Valley, adjacent to Wells Gray Park and the community of Clearwater, BC.

This area has been under discussion since the mid-nineties, and the local community has, over the past five years, consistently expressed concerns relating to the following:

Species at risk: The loss of habitat due to logging which experts in the field have indicated is critical for the survival of the Mountain Caribou population in the Clearwater River Valley.

Hydrology: In the past, logging in this area has caused flooding. This has resulted in road washouts which stranded visitors and residents creating numerous social, health and safety issues. Licensed water resources for both household and irrigation use have also been affected. Experts in their field have expressed concerns in regard to the stability of the slopes in the valley.

Economic Stability: Canfor must help the town of Clearwater to develop a strong secondary industry by respecting the values which make the tourism industry in the valley successful.

Local Land Use Plans: Canfor must respect existing land use plans (Guiding Principles for the Upper Clearwater Valley)

Of further concern is the failure of Canfor to meet its stated commitments to the public and to sustainable forestry management (██████████ CEO of Canfor, July 9, 2012, Presentation to the Special Committee on Timber Supply).

The non-timber values in the Clearwater Valley are exceptional and obvious and are an integral part of the local region's identity and economy. Despite active public engagement, Canfor has failed to propose logging that would try to incorporate the values that are vital to the community's health and safety, and the long term stability of both the economy and species at risk. Worse, Canfor began logging the west side of the valley in contradiction of its own commitments and while still in a meeting process with the Referral Group, representing the residents of Upper Clearwater.

Professional Reliance Problems

During our years of consultation with Canfor's Forestry Planning Supervisor (an RFT), it has become apparent that:

*this forestry professional was beholden to his employer, Canfor, and did not provide an independent oversight of the timber harvesting project in the Clearwater Valley.

*this forestry professional chose consultants to help prepare company harvest prescriptions who were not well qualified within their fields:

--Hired a biologist with little if any recognized expertise in Mountain Caribou ecology to advise on caribou management

--Engaged a hydrologist unwilling to acknowledge the implications of climate change on his prescriptions

*this forestry professional refused to allow reasonable public access to the final wildlife and hydrology reports commissioned by Canfor as well as to its terrain report

Our Contact with Professional Associations

In June 2017, the Wells Gray Gateway Protection Society filed complaints of professional misconduct with:

*the Association of BC Forestry Professionals against Canfor's Forestry Planning Supervisor, and

*the College of Applied Biology against Cascadian Natural Resource Consultants' biologist

Now, 7 months later, we have had no response to our complaints from these professional associations.

Contact with Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations

The District Manager of Natural Resource Operations is [REDACTED] Due to present legislation, her hands are tied in providing protection for environmental and community values. The most she has been able to do is delay issuing logging permits while we are awaiting a decision by federal Environment Minister Catherine McKenna on the threatened federally-designated species-at-risk Mountain Caribou habitat in the Clearwater River Valley.

Recommended Changes to Professional Reliance

*The concept of Professional Reliance is problematic because it depends on qualified professionals to review and make decisions which may not be acceptable to their employers. This conflict of interest could be avoided by hiring Ministry staff or independent consultants (paid by the government) to do the reviews and decisions.

*Professional associations must enforce professional standards and this should be monitored by the government.

*Professional associations must be required to follow-up promptly on unauthorized practices and this should be monitored by the government.

*The authority of District Managers must be strengthened to safeguard public and environmental interests in relation to forestry development.